

What is the Federal Budget?

The Federal budget is, at its core, a document which symbolizes the moral foundations of our country, and that provides great opportunity to help and support equal opportunity and care for the least of these.

More specifically, the Federal Budget is a blueprint first drafted by the President and revised by Congress, which outlines how much money the government will take in as revenue, and how much it will spend.

There are three different kinds of spending:

- **Tax spending:** refers to tax cuts/credits
- **Mandatory spending:** is authorized by permanent laws, and commonly referred to as “entitlement spending”
- **Discretionary spending:** changes in amount and in what it encapsulates on an annual basis

The faith community is predominantly concerned with discretionary spending, as it typically includes programs pertaining to: health, education, and housing assistance, which the faith community has expressed deep concern over. It is also important to note that there are programs listed as mandatory spending that the faith community is deeply concerned with, such as Food Stamps.

Why is the Faith Community concerned with the Federal Budget/Discretionary Spending?

Because there is a limited amount of money the Federal Government can spend, the money must be divided amongst competing interests; sufficient funds may not be available for some programs in order to fund others. Thus, the Federal Government is prioritizing, and in doing so enunciating wherein the values of country lie. It is, therefore, unmistakably a moral document. There are programs under the umbrella of discretionary spending that the faith community believes should take priority, as these programs seek to embody both the value of equal opportunity for all God’s people, and of caring for the “least of these”.

Some of these programs include:

- **Health care:**
 - o Health and Human Services Agencies
 - o SCHIP (State Children’s Health Insurance Program) is extremely important to the faith community and is actually listed under mandatory spending
- **Education:** Almost all education programs are discretionary spending programs, except for a small number of programs such as student loans, some vocational grants, school lunch, and a few tax benefit programs.
- **Housing Assistance:** Federal Low-Income Housing Programs

Furthermore, the Federal Budget indirectly informs the faith community of the width of the gap between what these programs need, and what the Federal Government will provide – a gap that faith communities strive to fill.